

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Office for the Blind honors employees, consumers, partners

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) Executive Director Christopher Smith presented 17 department awards to outstanding consumers, partners and employees of the agency at its annual awards banquet held recently at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Frankfort.

"Today we recognized staff for their commitment, partners for their support, and consumers who remain focused and driven toward their goals," Smith said. "In these challenging economic times, OFB is taking action and leading change in order to assure quality services for every individual we serve."

OFB is a state government rehabilitation agency in the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet that offers assistance to persons who are blind or visually impaired and also provides services for employers. Last year, 2,556 people in Kentucky were served by the agency.

The following is a list of 2009 OFB award winners.

Vocational Achievement Award - The award recognizes a person with a visual impairment who has successfully completed rehabilitation services and overcome obstacles to find employment. The following awards were given: Abby Cocanougher, Boyle County; William "Tony" Daugherty, Daviess County; Donald Gerard, Jr., Warren County; LeAnn Hillard, Clay County; and Brian Mullins, Jefferson County.

Betty J. Niceley Independent Living Award recognizes a consumer's perseverance in dealing with a visual impairment. Charles McGehee, McLean County, and James Yonts, Muhlenberg County, each received the award.

Michael P. Bell Counselor of the Year Award goes to the rehabilitation counselor who has demonstrated over a two-year period exemplary job performance. As a result, the counselor assists a high number of consumers in obtaining quality employment. This year's recipient is Norma McCormick, Prestonsburg.

Florence M. Terry Counselor of the Year Award goes to the independent living counselor who has demonstrated exemplary performance in working with consumers toward the goal of maximizing their independent skills in home and community. This year's recipient is Devona Ashley, Owensboro.

Partnership of the Year Award recognizes dedication to the mission of the OFB to assist people with visual impairments in becoming more independent and productive in the workplace, community and home. The following were awarded this year: Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Franklin County; Federal Correctional Institution, Boyd County; Eastern Kentucky University, Madison County; and Southeastern KY Rehabilitation Industries (SEKRI), Harlan County.

Executive Director's Outstanding Performance Award is given in recognition of a staff member that has shown stellar performance in one or more areas relating to the work of their position with the Office for the Blind. As a result of their performance there was a positive impact on the agency and consumers served. This year's recipient is Kent Jones, orientation and mobility instructor, Louisville.

The Eagle Award is given in recognition of a staff person who has diligently worked to place individuals into competitive employment. The criterion for receiving this award is based upon placing significantly disabled individual receiving social security disability into substantial gainful employment defined by the social security

system. This year's winners include Silver Eagle Winner Norma McCormick, vocational rehabilitation counselor, Prestonsburg, and Bronze Eagle Winner Twyla Hammons, vocational rehabilitation counselor, Somerset.

Charles W. McDowell Award recognizes exemplary work and significant contributions from an OFB career employee that have had a major impact on services for the blind and visually impaired across the state. This year's winner is Mike Hall, vocational rehabilitation counselor, Prestonsburg.

The Education and Workforce Development Cabinet coordinates learning programs from P-16, and manages and supports training and employment functions in the Department of Workforce Investment. For more information about our programs, visit www.educationcabinet.ky.gov or www.workforce.ky.gov or call 502-564-0372.